News release

19 July 2007

Torrential downpours to hit holiday travel

As many schools break up for the summer holidays the Met Office is warning that more serious torrential downpours are on the way.

The risk of extremely heavy rain, thunder and lightning is greatest in the central and eastern parts of England on Friday, where up to 100 mm (four inches) could fall in a short period. Other areas at risk include south-west England and eastern parts of Wales, where there could be up to 50 mm (two inches) of rain.

Such significant amounts of rain could cause dangerous driving conditions at the start of the first major getaway of the summer holidays. The Met Office is working closely with the Highways Agency and Environment Agency to help warn motorists and residents about the potential for flooding.

Keith Groves, Head of Forecasting at the Met Office, said: "We are talking about a major rainfall event. When you get such heavy rainfall in such a short time then there is a greater risk of flooding. Areas such as Birmingham, the M5/M4 corridor and the Cotswolds are at the greatest risk of the most rain, but anywhere in England and Wales could see torrential downpours at some stage tomorrow and people should keep an eye on our forecasts."

The Highways Agency said: "The warning comes as many schools across England break up for the summer holidays. Rain and spray can reduce visibility and more than double the distance it takes to stop. Drivers are advised to use headlights and keep well back from the vehicle in front. Drivers are also advised to check the Met Office weather forecast and their routes for delays before they travel, and to listen for bulletins on the radio whilst they are on the road."

Phil Rothwell, Environment Agency Head of Flood Risk Policy, said: "Flash flooding in recent days and weeks has been very sudden and has often occurred in areas where there were previously few flooding incidents in living memory. Therefore, everyone should stay fully aware of the weather situation. Where there is the danger of rivers rising people should check for flood warnings in their area."

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